

INFANT & TODDLER ORAL HEALTH: EARLY CHILDHOOD CARIES

What is Early Childhood Caries?

- Early Childhood Caries (ECC) is severe tooth decay in the baby teeth of young children. ECC causes pain and infection in children with the disease.
- ECC typically affects the front teeth and then spreads to the child's other teeth as they erupt.

What causes ECC?

- ECC is caused by frequent drinking of sugary liquids from a bottle or sippy cup.
- Sugary liquids bathe the teeth in acid and eventually this will form tooth decay.

How can I prevent ECC in my child?

- Give children water at bedtime - never put your child to bed with a bottle or sippy cup filled with milk, juice, or other sweet liquid.
- Limit the amount of non-water drinks you give your child each day. Make sure that these drinks are provided with meals and not throughout the day.
- Begin wiping or brushing your child's teeth as soon as they appear with a clean, soft cloth or a child or infant sized toothbrush.
- If your child uses a pacifier, do not dip it in sugary liquids.
- Get your child familiar with someone looking in their mouth by lifting their lips and inspecting their teeth regularly.

How can I tell if my child has ECC?

- Lift your child's lip and if teeth are present, check the teeth for white or dark spots. Healthy baby teeth will be white and shiny.
- If you notice white spots on your child's front teeth, your child may have the beginning signs of ECC.
- Brown or black spots on the front teeth are serious and could be signs of severe ECC.

What should I do if I think my child has ECC?

- Your child's teeth must be treated by a dentist that specializes in young children.
- Take your child to a dentist as soon as possible.

BRUSHING TIPS FOR CHILDREN

Always use a soft-bristled, child or infant toothbrush.

Replace your child's toothbrush every three months.

Never allow your child to share toothbrushes, it spreads germs.

How to Brush Your Child's Teeth

- Place the toothbrush against the gum line at a 45-degree angle. Use a small circular motion to brush your child's teeth and gums.



- Brush back and forth on the chewing surfaces of your child's teeth holding the brush flat.



- Brush the back of your child's teeth.
- Brush your child's teeth after each feeding or at least two times a day. Be sure to brush at bedtime to remove bacteria that can cause decay while your child is sleeping.



CHECKLIST

Inspect your child's teeth regularly for signs of ECC.

Only fill bottles and sippy cups with water unless served with a meal.

FLOSSING TIPS FOR CHILDREN

Flossing cleans between the teeth where a toothbrush can't reach.

You can begin flossing your child's teeth as soon as any two teeth touch.

How to Floss Your Child's Teeth

- Wrap about 18 inches of floss around the middle fingers. Gently slide the floss between the teeth (don't snap the floss into the gums).



- As the floss reaches the gum line, make a C-shape around the tooth until you feel pressure against your child's tooth.



- Gently scrape the tooth surface with the floss.



- Move the floss as it becomes soiled and repeat the process for each tooth.



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